



TCGIS PTO Summary Plan for 2015-16

This write-up provides a review of the background and vision for the TCGIS PTO in the 2015-16 school year, as decided at the June 2015 general meeting.

What is the context?

Throughout this school year, the PTO had faced difficulty in the recruitment of volunteers to head up committees and help out with events. In the closing months, the PTO came to a turning point in the organization's future capacity and direction. With the benefit of hindsight, one way to put it is that a chronic issue became acute.

The essence of the challenge was unmet volunteering need for the 2015-16 school year, in a variety of key roles:

- A full complement of PTO executive board officers, especially that of PTO President
- PTO committee chairs
- Chairs for the various large-scale events that the PTO has traditionally held throughout the year

The PTO executive board felt strongly that our traditional workload as an organization was not sustainable. Without volunteers willing to step into a variety of leadership and coordinating roles, the usual activities of the PTO cannot be reasonably undertaken.

How did this happen? Many factors have been suggested: changes in the nature of the school as it grows and matures – such as overall school size and school institutional capacity to address issues previously handled by parents; the drop-off and pick-up routine at the school's current location, in which parents interact less frequently (compared to walking children into the school as was regularly done in the past); the natural cycling out of "veteran" parents who have handled numerous PTO events and roles in previous years; a general impression of PTO stability and fully met capacity among the broader TCGIS community; and insufficiencies in building a pipeline of new volunteers and organizational leadership.

What is the 2015-16 approach?

At the meeting on June 2, 2015, the PTO reviewed volunteering challenges and discussed a set of options for the next year. The PTO membership voted to adopt a "minimalist" option as its strategic direction for 2015-16. Based on a working document distributed to the TCGIS community, combined with comments made at the meeting and follow-up analysis, this approach means:

- Reduction to only a few low-effort and low-cost community events
- Elimination of regular monthly meetings
- A blank slate of activities for the year, with ones only undertaken as volunteer capacity permits
- Minimal activity of the executive board
- Establishment/continuation of three committees: Community, Teacher Appreciation, and Finance
- Creation of a short-term Fundraising Task Force
- Creation of a short-term Bylaws Update Task Force
- Elimination of grants to teachers and the school, depending on the work of the Fundraising Task Force

The path for the PTO in 2015-16 is to start without specific events or fundraising planned, and build a set of activities. In particular, our renewal effort will need to be mindful of (1) overall volunteer capacity, (2) building sustainability of volunteering in future years, (3) orientation towards the PTO core goals of helping build TCGIS community and supporting teachers.

Here is a rundown in terms of organizational structure and core duties:

- The Community and Teacher Appreciation committees will produce events and undertake activities
- The Finance Committee provides financial oversight
- The Fundraising Task Force is forming to identify a plan for PTO revenue, including a review of the uses of PTO funds and overall budgeting goals
- The Bylaws Update Task Force will revise the PTO bylaws to accommodate our new direction
- The executive board will oversee PTO activities and develop policies and guidance as necessary

An important feature of the vision is the creation of a task force to look at fundraising. The PTO will enter the 2015-16 year with a healthy fund balance of over \$15,000, which can support a number of smaller events and undertakings without additional revenue -- perhaps for a couple of years. However, without fundraising, key questions for our longer-term viability arise in both grantmaking and general financial stability. A particularly tough case is in grants to teachers. In recent years, one of the single largest expenditures of the PTO has been through Classroom Enrichment Funds, which are provided to teachers (and administered by the school) for enriching the classroom experience beyond what is normally provided under a school's budget. Under the starting point for the 2015-16 vision, which lacks a fundraising component, this type of grantmaking is at risk.

Have leadership roles been filled?

At the June meeting, the PTO membership elected a truncated slate of PTO board officers for 2015-16: Elizabeth Tobias as President (who had expressed interest in Vice President but graciously agreed to step in), Kirsten Holmlund as Secretary, and Matt Burress as Treasurer. Note, this is fewer than the five-person PTO board under the current bylaws. An important issue is recruitment of additional officers.

Thankfully, as the final PTO meeting of the year approached, folks came forward to take on other essential roles for us to remain an active organization. Kristi Johnson will chair the Community Committee and Cindy Miller will chair the Teacher Appreciation Committee. Each committee is tasked with developing and implementing events and activities in 2015-16. The work of these committees will be central to promoting our core PTO goals: building community and supporting teachers. Matt Burress as PTO Treasurer will chair the Finance Committee. There are also chairs for the task forces: Kami Blackwell Kinney will head up the Fundraising Task Force, and Matt Burress will lead the Bylaws Update Task Force.

How can I help?

First of all, volunteers are needed! All are welcome regardless of past experience or participation. There are opportunities for involvement that suit various levels of commitment and available time, so signing up or expressing interest does not obligate you to take on more than is comfortable. The PTO can use people with a variety of skill sets, who have time, energy, and interest at whatever level works for them, who want to use their talents to support our school, and who want to have fun meeting other parents.

Over the summer, the Community and Teacher Appreciation committees will begin their efforts. Your experience is important as these groups form and chart their directions. Volunteers for the Finance Committee, Fundraising Task Force, and Bylaws Update Task Force are also quite welcome. Look for more information soon on volunteering, or contact us at tcgispto@gmail.com.